



5TH DISTRICT NEWS

URBAN PARKS
ISSUE



King County

A REPORT FROM KING COUNTY COUNCILMEMBER DWIGHT PELZ

June 2005

Dear Friends and Neighbors:

You and I live in one of the most densely crowded urban communities in the State. Our neighborhoods in South Seattle, Tukwila, Renton, and unincorporated King County are home to freeways, three airports, shopping malls, and apartment complexes.

Yet surprisingly we also live next to some enchanting pockets of natural beauty where the environment is thriving, despite the obstacles of urban life. And behind each of these ecosystems there is invariably a story of citizens fighting to allow nature to succeed.

I am proud to have worked hard in my nine years on the County Council to preserve open space for future generations. Four years ago we visited many of these sites in a newsletter. With this update I want to tell you what is happening at these sites, about the people who are making them thrive, and invite you to visit them. There are also some exciting new parks and open space to visit. On a weekday or a weekend this summer take your kids, or visitors from out of town, or your best friend, or just yourself to one or more of these sites and discover what urban environmentalism is all about. I am sure you will come to share the pride I feel in our community and our commitment.

Sincerely,

Kubota Garden

Kubota Garden is a stunning 20 acre landscape in South Seattle that blends Japanese garden concepts with native Northwest plants. The Garden is a spectacular setting of hills and valleys, interlaced with streams, waterfalls, ponds, bridges, and rock outcroppings with a rich array of plant material.

Master landscape artist Fujito Kubota started this garden in 1927. A horticultural pioneer who was also self-taught, Kubota began merging Japanese design techniques with North American materials in his display garden. In the forties during the war, the garden was abandoned for four years while the Kubota family suffered internment at Camp Minidoka in Idaho.



Moon Bridge -- Kubota Garden

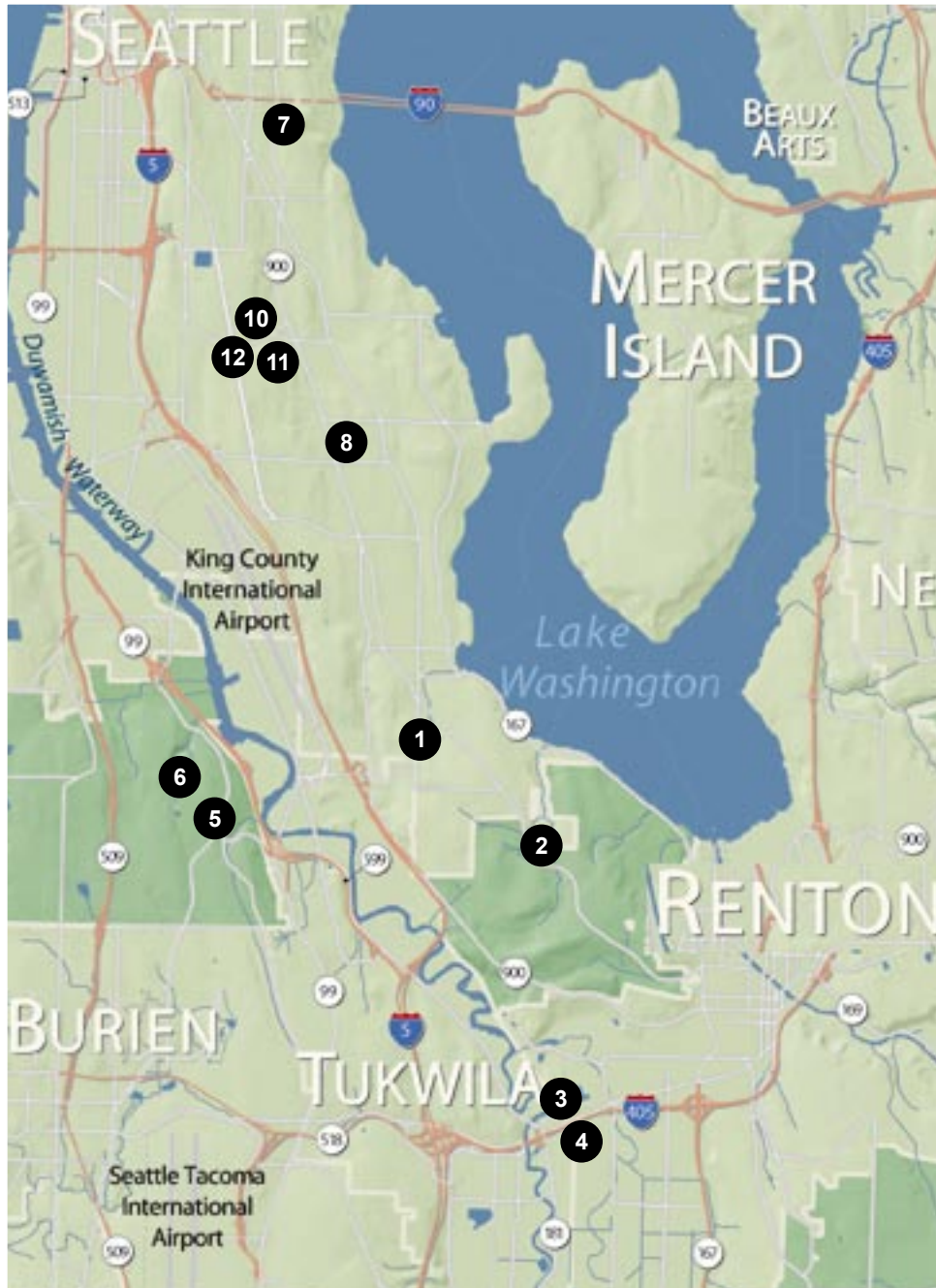
When the property became a target for developers, community groups encouraged the Seattle Landmarks Preservation Board to designate the core area of the garden

as a Historical Landmark. In 1987, the property was given to the city of Seattle as a gift from the Kubota family.

Sadly, Tom Kubota passed away last August at the age of 87. Tom was a man who saw his family lose everything yet chose to live life without rancor, and his gift to the people of this region is a living memorial to the human spirit. His legacy ensures that future generations will always have a green refuge in

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Urban Parks Locator



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Black River Riparian Forest

The Black River Riparian Forest is an odd slip of nature in an odd corner of the County. Most people don't know the history of the Black River. Lake Washington actually drained out of its south end into the River. It flowed through Renton to converge with the Green River in Tukwila to form the Duwamish. When the Ship Canal was dredged in 1916 connecting Lake Washington to Puget Sound through Lake Union, the Black River ceased to flow. Today the Black River Riparian Forest (BRRF) is virtually all that is left of that waterway.

The BRRF is home to one of the largest Great Blue Heron colonies in the region. Last year there were about 260 adult birds on 135 active nests, and this year looks like it will be similar in size. Heron arrived at the site in the 1980's, and established a rookery in the cottonwood forest. These magnificent birds feed in the pond, roost in the trees, mate and raise their young here. Look up and you might be able to spy a few of their huge nests at the top of the tall black cottonwood trees. The Forest supports many other animals as well - there are river otter, red fox, deer, rabbit, and muskrat, along with frogs, salamanders and garter snakes. The pond and creek contain migrating chinook and coho, and cutthroat trout. And take note you bird watchers - more than 50 bird species have been sighted in the area!

King County was the primary source for nearly \$8 million in acquisition funds that helped preserve Renton's Black River Riparian Forest. The funds made it possible to protect this remarkable oasis that now finds

itself in the middle of urban development, providing a necessary buffer and more land for wildlife habitat.



The viability of the Great Blue heron colony is threatened by a newly proposed development that would put 65 single family houses directly up against this acutely sensitive heron colony.

Today, however, the viability of this site and its heron colony are threatened by a newly proposed development that would put 65 single family houses directly up against this acutely sensitive heron colony. Herons in the Black River Riparian Forest use the trees and wetlands on the project site to forage for food and help to raise their young. Without adequate protection, the impact of this many people living so close to this sensitive place will be profound. The development is being appealed in Superior Court, with a court date for

later this year. The developer has indicated a willingness to sell, but the price will likely be in

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Waterworks Gardens

Water Works Gardens is an 8-acre public park located next to King County's South Treatment Plant in Renton, WA, and is actually right across the street from the Black River Riparian Forest. As the South Treatment plant grew in size, King County committed mitigation funds to enhance the site. Artists, engineers, and landscape architects collaborated to build a man-made wetland and artwork which purifies the water while challenging your personal definition of public art. Along with trails, basalt columns, native plants and wildlife, the ponds and marshes of Waterworks filter and clean stormwater from the plant's fifty acres of roads, parking lots and hard surfaces. After passing through Waterworks, the treated stormwater flows into Springbrook Creek.

Waterworks is designed as a series of garden "rooms." The Knoll is the entry to Waterworks. The path then passes through a series of leaf-shaped ponds, an inlaid mosaic Grotto, and wetlands.

The gardens are open between dawn and dusk year-round. The Park is located on the North side of the Renton Treatment Facility, at 1200 Monster Rd SW, in Renton.

Black River Riparian Forest *continued*

the millions of dollars. Without adequate protection, the impact of this many people living so close to this sensitive place will be profound. An active and concerned local group known as Herons Forever, can be reached at www.heronforever.org if you would like to learn more or find out how you can help.

If you would like a field trip to see the site and learn how you can help, please contact Suzanne Krom at szkrom@juno.com. The young herons are expected to fledge through June. If you'd like to see the site when this season's young are still here, be sure to contact her soon.

The Black River Forest is located just east of the Renton Treatment Facility Plant at 1200 Monster Rd SW, in Renton. A trail to the wetland on Oakesdale Road, just off of Grady Way SW.

Annual Fledglings Tour

Join us for one of the most extraordinary field trips at the Black River heron colony. This is prime time for new fledglings taking their first flights. We should see several new fledglings learning to fly (especially land!) and find food.

When: Sat., June 18, 10 am - noon

Where: Black River Riparian Forest and great blue heron colony

Information: Contact Suzanne Krom at szkrom@juno.com

Co-sponsored by Herons Forever and Seattle Audubon

Bring binoculars if you have them and wear boots if it's rained recently. Black River is wheelchair accessible if you have assistance.

Duwamish Riverbend Park

One of the things I am most proud of in my 9 years as a King County Councilmember is my work to preserve sensitive land threatened by development. In 2003 we were able to gain funding in the King County budget from the Conservation Futures Fund, which is a dedicated fund of money set aside from property taxes to acquire open space in the county for the property also known as Grandmother's Hill in the city of Tukwila. This 10.5 acre parcel is important as an oasis of nature in one of the most industrially developed areas in King County.

The hill is a glacial remnant that contains fossils millions of years old. This land is also a sacred site to Native Americans and is referred to in many oral traditions of the Puget Sound Salish people. The property also includes 600 feet of shoreline along the Duwamish in the critical transition zone between salt and fresh water that is important to salmon habitat. I have visited the site and have been able to witness a wide variety of native plants, and views that spanned the Duwamish valley from Mt. Rainier to the south to downtown Seattle to the north.

The hill was threatened by a proposal to dynamite the area and to develop a light-industrial facility. Concerned neighbors formed a group called Friends of the Duwamish Riverbend Hill to work to

save this natural gem. This determined group of volunteers brought this project to the attention of the Cascade Land Conservancy, elected officials, and neighbors throughout Tukwila.

The long term vision for Grand-

mother's Hill is to develop the site to include a minimum-impact trail system to the lower and upper vistas, as well as the woodland, wetland, and meadow areas. Outdoor interpretive displays would teach students and visitors about local and geologic history, botany and Native American traditions. The City of Tukwila now owns the site and will someday soon open it as a cultural and natural preserve. The Friends of

the Duwamish Riverbend Hills are committed to long-term advocacy and stewardship of the site. Sound Transit is now using the flat part of the site for construction staging of the light rail alignment to SeaTac Airport. As mitigation for that use, Sound Transit will help pay \$233,000 for the development of the park and trail system over the next two years. Cascade Land Conservancy has raised another \$100,000, but another \$300,000 is needed to complete the park plan.

To help in future projects regarding the park, contact Bruce Fletcher, Parks and Recreation Director for the City of Tukwila at 206-767-2342 or call Georgina Kerr, with the Friends of Duwamish Riverbend Hill at 206-444-9695.



Councilmember Pelz (right) finds fossils while on a tour of Grandmothers's Hill.

Mt. Baker Ridge Viewpoint Park

Imagine, if you will, an area in the middle of the Mount Baker commercial district, where you can sit and enjoy stunning panoramas of downtown Seattle, Beacon Hill, Elliott Bay, the Olympics and the sunset. This was the vision of a number of active South End residents behind taking a vacant plot of land along 31st and creating the Mt. Baker Ridge Viewpoint Park. Although in its nascent planning stages right now, Viewpoint Park will enhance all of South Seattle by preserving open space as a natural area within this neighborhood revitalization district.

Located at 31st and Atlantic near That's Amore, and across the street from the Sweet and Savory Café, the space for the budding park is a piece of vacant land left over from the Mount Baker tunnel project. The parcel is part of an environmentally sensitive, slide

prone area. Drainage problems are causing the sidewalk to slip down the hill. Residents have banded together to raise funds and turn this neglected site into an area that can be enjoyed by all, making this truly a community effort.

Key elements of the Park's low maintenance design include a pier that juts out toward the view, and large rocks (sunset stones) that function both as seating and as markers indicating where the sun sets at the solstice and equinox. Residents have likened the innovative design to having their own contemporary "Stonehenge" in their very back yards. For volunteer opportunities and additional information about Viewpoint Park, contact David Berger at dab20@aol.com

Hitt's Hill Park

Located atop a steep hill on the southwest end of Columbia City sits the newest park in Rainier Valley, Hitt's Hill Park. This 3.2-acre heavily wooded site is a place of unexpected urban respite, a place to breathe fresh air, observe plants and urban wildlife, and simply enjoy a slice of nature in a part of the Rainier Valley which has little open space. The site of this new park was once home to the Hitt's Fireworks factory, which created pyrotechnics for the movie *Gone with the Wind* as well as decades of fireworks for Ivar's Lake Union July 4 shows. From the top of the hill, you can see Lake Washington, downtown Seattle and the Rainier Valley.

Park development has been led by a strong community support group, the Friends of Hitt's Hill Park, who first had the idea in 1999 of preserving the open space and turning it into a safe neighborhood park. Five years later, after collaborating with numerous entities, raising necessary funds, and giving thousands of volunteer hours, the neighborhood reached their goal and celebrated the official opening of Hitt's Hill Park. The Friends have made an ongoing commitment to the maintenance of the site, and without their effort, this Park would only be a dream instead of a reality.

Hitt's Hill Park is located at 5234 37th Ave S, between Renton and Rainier Avenues South and between South Brandon Street and 39th Avenue South. You can reach the park on the #7 Bus.

Friends of Hitt's Hill Park work parties are scheduled for the second and third Saturday of every month March through June, and August through November. 10 a.m. - 1 p.m., tools, gloves and lunch provided (by Tutta Bella Neapolitan Pizzeria). For more information, contact Michael Keller at mrkeller@drizzle.com.



*The site of this new park was once home to the Hitt's Fireworks factory, which created pyrotechnics for the movie *Gone with the Wind* as well as decades of fireworks for Ivar's Lake Union July 4 shows.*

Point Rediscovery

Located in off Des Moines Memorial Drive in Boulevard Park is a hidden delight called Point Rediscovery. Formerly an industrial waste site, this site has been transformed into an urban park and is one of the most successful fishery restorations on the Green/Duwamish River. The clear running stream, wetlands, vegetation and wildlife make this the ideal “outdoor classroom”.

At the center of Point Rediscovery is Hamm Creek, which runs from White Center to the Duwamish River. This formerly polluted and neglected stream has been brought back to its natural state where fish and other habitat have begun to thrive, due to the enormous efforts of generous volunteers.

Restoration of the Creek began more than 20 years ago as a trash and litter clean up. Efforts were led by John Beal, a South Park resident, who first decided to clean up and restore Hamm Creek in 1979. What began as a trash and litter clean up evolved into the revitalization of a creek that had been dramatically altered by the industrialization of the Duwamish. School children, environmental groups, neighbors and government at all levels have become part of the Hamm Creek restoration, thanks to Mr. Beal.

I have worked over the past five years to get dedicated open space dollars in the King County budget to protect the ravine upstream from Point Rediscovery from development which could spoil this urban gem. We have acquired the two key parcels most likely to be developed and hope to someday add trails and other amenities to this part of the ravine.

If you would like to lend your muscle to Point Rediscovery planting sessions, or other Hamm Creek restoration efforts, please contact John Beal with IMAPAL at 206-762-3640 or email stream101@aol.com.



Councilmember Pelz (left) and citizen activist John Beal visit Hamm Creek.

Other Parks News

Several other parks are opening soon or have seen changes in South Seattle. These include:

Benefit Park

9320 38th Avenue S.

This park has a new play area, walking paths, and gardens. The Friends of Benefit Park were very active in this project. To help Benefit Park, please contact Chris Morrow at 723-8179.

Lake People Park (Xacua'bs)

31st S. and S. Bradford St.

This brand new urban park is both restored native forest and peaceful green space. This park was made possible by a generous gift of land and tons of volunteer work by the Friends of Goat Hill. To find out more please contact Kari Stiles at 332-9900.

York Park

3650 Renton Ave. S.

This recently named park participated in some innovative non-native plant management methods when April 24, 2005 became “Take your kidd to work day.” Four goats were herded in a small area to begin non-native plant clearing. Construction of park improvements (pathway, benches, picnic table, lawn and landscape areas) will begin in early May. Volunteers will assist in planting and ongoing vegetation management work this fall.

Chief Sealth Trail

This 3.6 mile, multi-use trail from North Beacon Hill to the south city limits of Seattle along the City Light corridor is currently under construction with a scheduled completion in 2007. RCI-Herzog, the general contractor for the Link Light Rail alignment through the Rainier Valley, is building the trail as an innovative way to use the soils from light rail construction. This will save the city time and money and enable the trail to open earlier than anticipated.

Dead Horse Canyon

Dead Horse Canyon is a hidden jewel tucked away where Skyway meets the southeast Seattle city limits. Dead Horse Canyon is a lush ravine in Seattle's Lakeridge Park, which straddles Seattle's Rainier Beach and Skyway/West Hill neighborhoods at Rainier Avenue and 68th Ave South.

The Canyon is home to Taylor Creek and 200 foot old growth cedars which provide shelter for eagles and osprey. This gurgling, clean, clear, cold stream flows down the Canyon, under Rainier Ave., then into Lake Washington. Once a waterway with a small, but vibrant, salmon run, Taylor Creek is recovering with care from neighbors, and one day the salmon will return. For now it is a wonderful place for a mile and a half walk, and for you to volunteer on the weekend. The Friends of Deadhorse Canyon has worked closely with the local community for over 8 years to foster stewardship of the Canyon.

There are two different legends concerning the name of the Canyon. One is that is named for logged trees that inadvertently fell into the steep ravine. The loggers

wouldn't bother to fish them out and took to calling the wasted logs "dead horses." The other is that a horse died in the river, and the pioneer children gave the Canyon its nickname.



The Friends of Deadhorse Canyon has worked closely with the local community for over 8 years to foster stewardship of the Canyon.

On the third Saturday of every month, volunteers meet at 8:30 a.m. at Lakeridge Park on Rainier Ave, before heading into the Canyon to plant trees, remove invasive plants, take out trash, and provide the TLC needed to restore the Canyon and Creek. With more support from neighbors, we can restore an urban forest and salmon run currently the Seattle Urban

Nature Project is doing GIS and GPS mapping of the Canyon to better identify areas which need work and to monitor success on new plantings and areas cleared of invasive plants.

If you would like to participate in this restoration project, please contact either Darrell Dobson or Jude Siefker at (206) 772-1452 for additional information, suggestions or directions. These two volunteer extraordinaires are in charge of planning and working at the site.

Kubota Garden *continued*

South Seattle. We were proud to recognize his contributions to the area in a formal recognition last September before the Council.

Few people seem to have discovered this unique urban refuge. Even on warm weekend afternoons, you'll find only a handful of folks enjoying the streams, waterfalls and ponds. Stop by in the spring for a burst of blossoms or visit in mid-fall to watch the leaves turn color.

For those who are familiar with Kubota Garden, you may notice a few recent improvements, such as a new entry, three new accessible pathways, restrooms and infrastructure to support maintenance. Gerald Tsutakawa worked on the new wall and gate, and Kobayashi & Associates designed an entry rock garden.

Kubota Garden is located at 9600 Renton Avenue South. Once on Renton Ave, turn right on 55th Ave South. Metro Transit route 106 connects both downtown Seattle and Renton with the Garden. Admission is free, and it is open year round from sunup to sunset. Every third Saturday of each month from April to October folks meet from 8:00 to noon to help maintain the garden. Each fourth Saturday is a public tour which meets at the parking lot at 10:00 a.m. and 75-minute guided tours are available for eight or more visitors. Contact the Kubota Garden Foundation at (206) 725-5060 or go to www.kubota.org for more information.

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Urban Parks Update



Green River Trail

King County has one of the nation's finest urban trail systems, with over 170 miles of designated corridors enjoyed annually by thousands of hikers, bikers, and horse riders. Perhaps the best known is the Burke-Gilman Trail which then becomes the Sammamish River Trail. One of my goals over the past many years has been for the County to finish the last leg of this trail – the East Lake Sammamish Trail, which will allow you to bike from Issaquah to Ballard, if you so desire.

In our community we have the wonderful Green River Trail, which starts in South Park near the Boeing Plant, and then winds through Tukwila, Kent and Auburn. The trail is an impressive mix of urban industrial areas and quiet green spaces. Most of the length of the trail is separated from traffic and is paved with wide dirt shoulders.

Installed along the trail is an interesting and historically significant public art project, called the North Wind Fishing Weir project. This project features the

work of 4 artists that visually retells the legend of the native American regeneration myth. At low-tide, a cluster of bedrock is revealed in a bend of the Duwamish River. This cluster of rocks is believed to be the remnants of the Fishing Weir. This artwork has been placed along the trail near this unusual rock formation.

The Green River Trail holds a special place in my heart. Arthritis in the knee ended my jogging days, but I can still roller-blade for exercise. Since roller-bladers need a smooth surface, the Trail is perfect. On a nice day I might park near the Duwamish Turning Basin, or Fort Dent Park, and strap on my blades, and travel 5 or 6 miles before I turn around and go back.

The eventual plans are to extend the trail for 30 miles from Seattle's Alki point to Auburn's Narrows Park. Over the past twenty years, King County and the cities of Tukwila, Kent, and Auburn have worked together to make this trail a much appreciated addition to our area.